

COUNCIL ON AGING

Town Report - 2003

Paul Keegan, Chairman
Helene Tanenholtz, Vice Chairman
John Concordia, Secretary
Bettyann Chamberlin (term ended June, 2003)
Alfred Crommett
Lillian Goodman
Helen McLaughlin (appointed July, 2003)
Tim Swiss

Sharon M. Yager, Director
Vicky Pellegrino Assistant to Director
Cynthia M. Willis, Transportation Coordinator
Betty Neilson, Outreach Coordinator (resigned: June, 2003)
Jacqueline Lofgren (hired: July, 2003)
Marcia Grillo, Volunteer Coordinator

***The Town of Shrewsbury's Council On Aging Mission
is to develop and support community activities which enhance the well-being of
residents of the town who are age 60 or older .***

Overview of the Department:

The Council on Aging (COA) is a human service department which serves Shrewsbury seniors and oversees the Senior Center, located in its new facility at 98 Maple Avenue. The COA is overseen by the Town Manager, who appoints a seven member governing Board of volunteers. Two staff members are paid through a state grant, while the others are paid out of the Department's budget. The rest of the department is composed of numerous volunteers.

According to the Town Clerk's census data the COA received in July, the town's senior population dropped from 5,900 persons age 60 years and older, to 5,722 this year. Although this is only a decrease of less than 200 seniors, it is quite a contrast to the 600 person increase in seniors seen last year. Since the COA became a formal department in 1990, it appears to be the first time there has been a decrease in the town's senior population. During 2004, the COA will

be interested to see if this is a new trend, or if it may simply be the “calm before the storm” before the first “Baby Boomers” turn 60 in just a few short years.

Highlights of 2003:

2003 was yet another busy year of activity for the Council on Aging, as it completed its fourth full year occupying the new Senior Center. The department continued to maintain and develop the programs that are in place while continuing to determining the new needs, particularly of the upcoming “Boomers”. Highlights and other updates are detailed below.

Outreach: The department again underwent a change in its Outreach Coordinator when Betty Neilson resigned in June. Betty had begun her work at the COA as an assistant to her predecessor, Pauline Quist. When Pauline became ill, Betty filled Pauline’s position when Pauline lost her 3 year battle with cancer in 2002. In July, the COA hired Jacqueline Lofgren as the new Outreach Coordinator. Jacquie has been busy since her hire, updating reference materials, visiting frail Meals on Wheels clients, compiling statistics of visits, phone calls and cases. Sadly, Betty passed away due to illness in November and will be missed by the staff and those she assisted. Since 2002, the state Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) has funded both the Outreach position, and the Volunteer Coordinator position, for 18 hours per week. Both positions are funded through the state Formula Grant and the COA was grateful to our local legislators for the work they did in making sure funding for this important grant stayed in place this past fiscal year.

Sad Goodbyes: The COA lost two other important individuals in 2003. In March, the COA’s long-time Meals on Wheels driver, Peter Sena, passed away. Pete was a Veteran who will be remembered for his compassion and cheery disposition that he brought to all the clients on his Meals on Wheels route. Also in March, volunteer Al Sansevero passed away. Also a Veteran, Al volunteered as a Friendly Visitor, had served on the Friends of the Shrewsbury Senior Center,

Inc, was a volunteer driver and had served as the Newsletter Coordinator. Al was instrumental in getting the COA Newsletter, the Senior Edition, mailed to every senior in town, beginning in 1997, through the Friends group. To this day, the Senior Edition continues to be the COA's greatest outreach tool.

Board Changes: After serving two terms on the COA Board, Bettyann Chamberlin finished her COA Board term in June. Bettyann had been very active working on the Furnishing and Decorating Committee when the Senior Center was being built. She continues to be active at the Senior Center. New Board Member Helen McLaughlin was appointed as a replacement in July. A long time Town Meeting member, as well as serving with ADVISE, Helen also brings many talents to the COA Board.

Volunteerism: Marcia Grillo, in her third year as the Volunteer Coordinator, continued to develop and expand several new volunteering opportunities. The Senior Greeters at the new Shrewsbury High School has been an extremely successful program and is currently being looked at for duplication for all the schools in the Shrewsbury School system. She continues to organize the Senior Magazine television show, along with many other projects, including developing new Intergenerational programs with the schools and the community. In August, the first volunteer Newsletter Editor, Ailsa Macdonald was recruited. It is estimated that Ailsa is performing over 20 hours per month of service that previously had to be done by staff. Marcia also recruited a team of four special office volunteers to assist with statistics, new projects and overall office coverage, to provide staff with greater assistance. Over the years that the "volunteer values" have been tracked for statistics, the value continues to be greater than the COA's budget and this fiscal year was no exception. For the Fiscal Year that ended in June, the volunteer value (based on the values EOEA established), was \$263,202.00. The Town's COA line item for that same time frame was \$208,162.05. In May, a Volunteer Ice Cream Social was

held to honor COA Volunteers who had put in 20 or more hours of service during the year. The volunteers were thanked by legislators and Selectmen and were personally served their ice cream by the Town Manager and the Assistant Town Manager.

Nutrition News: In September, the COA welcomed its new Meal Site Coordinator, Cheryl Lucier, to the Senior Center. Cheryl, who is employed by the Age Center of Worcester, is a life-long town resident and has brought tremendous enthusiasm and excitement to the Shrewsbury Meal Site. In the meantime, the COA continues to work with agencies on local, state and federal levels to improve the Meal Site, the quality of meals served and creating a “Boomer Friendly” Meal Site. Although the annual numbers are down slightly (as seen in the chart at the end of this report), December proved to be the busiest month of 2003 with 440 meals served at the Meal Site and 1,703 meals delivered through Meals on Wheels.

Updates on Transportation Grant: In 2002, a Mobility Assistance Grant was written through the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction for a new, independent van. The grant was written in conjunction with the Friends of the Shrewsbury Senior Center, Inc. By applying with the Friends, a 501(3) c corporation, the application was eligible for both federal and state funds, which increased the likelihood that the application would be approved. The application process began in March, 2002 and notification was received in October, 2002, that the grant had been approved, but that it could take 16 to 18 months before the vehicle was received.

In August, 2003, the COA and the Friends received notification that the van was being constructed. At the September 15, 2003 Special Town Meeting, a revolving account was established to take in the funds needed to operate the van when it arrived. The van was finally delivered on December 5, 2003. This was an exciting way to end the year! This is the biggest joint venture the Friends and the COA have collaborated on other than the Senior Edition Newsletter. It is hoped that the van will be on the road by the Spring of 2004.

SHINE: The Shrewsbury Council on Aging continued to play a significant role in the state's SHINE program again this year. SHINE (Serving Health Information Needs Of Elders) is a free health benefits counseling program overseen by the state's Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). The program changed significantly in 2002 and the regional association of COAs in Central Massachusetts, (CEMACA) began to administer the program. As the CEMACA SHINE Liaison, the Shrewsbury COA Director has been very involved in the program and the Shrewsbury COA has offered its Consultation Room as a satellite office for SHINE a few days per week. Since Shrewsbury has proved to be a central location, SHINE Counselors from across Central MA meet monthly in Shrewsbury to get the latest updates on Health Insurance needs.

Other Events and News: In June, the Shrewsbury Firefighters Association put on their fourth annual picnic and Fire Safety program to the seniors. This fun and educational event has quickly become a tradition everyone looks forward to each year. In September, the fourth annual Health Fair was also held during the Spirit of Shrewsbury Fall Festival and was again a large success. The fair featured a panel of speakers who spoke about Prescription Drugs, a boxed lunch, exhibits, raffles and screenings. The COA hopes to plan an extra-special event in 2004 for its 5th Anniversary of the event. In October, a record number of 600 flu shots were given at the Senior Center in collaboration with the Health Department.

The COA again enjoyed entertainment funded by the Shrewsbury Cultural Arts Council Grant. Actress Linda Meyer of Living History Productions again put on a one-woman show, this one entitled "Schmoozing With Sophie Tucker", remembering the last of the Red Hot Mommas. Storyteller John Porcino also put on a Winter Celebration show during a full-house special Holiday lunch.

Summary: As the Town's population continues to change, the COA continues to prepare for the demands that will undoubtedly arise as the Town works to serve the senior population. Since 2004 will begin the fifth year in the new Senior Center, the COA looks forward to another busy year of growth and opportunity.

Four Year Comparison of Nutrition Program Statistics

Year (Calendar)	Meal Site Meals Served	Meals on Wheels Meals Served	Total Meals Served through Shrewsbury's Nutrition Program
2000	4,571	18,782	23,353
2001	2,978	19,956	22,934
2002	3,750	19,218	22,968
2003	3,672	18,616	22,288